

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP

A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

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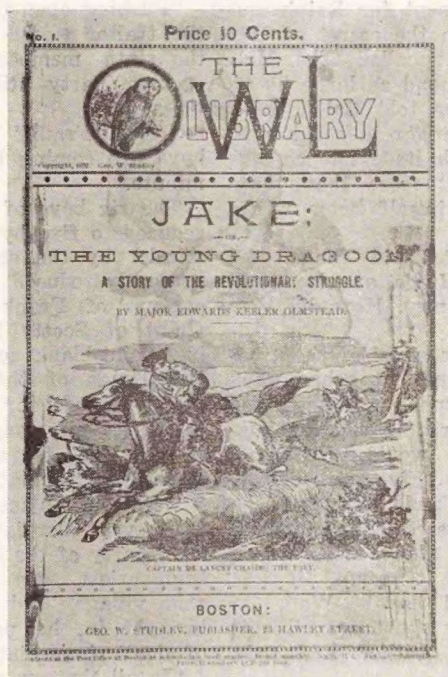
June 15, 1969

Whole No. 441

The Anatomy of Dime Novels

No. 15 Stories of World Wide Adventure (conclusion)

By J. Edward Leithead



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The Anatomy of Dime Novels

No. 15 Stories of World Wide Adventure (conclusion)

By J. Edward Leithead

"Oh, he got tired of the work and he lies asleep on his mat near the fire-place. You got the message I sent you by Sevin? No? Well . . . You see, Thado, we were all scholars at the same school in America, and among the servants was one who professed to have once been a Thug, but who had foresworn the creed when he left this land. Then this fellow, whose name was Ram Rupee, was fatally injured. Ralph Dean had done him some service and on his death-bed the old man sent for Ralph and bequeathed to him the secret of this treasure, which he called 'The Midnight Sun,' a diamond as large as an ostrich egg. Rupee told Ralph there was no end of danger in seeking it, and that, although its existence was known to all, not more than three persons besides himself knew where it was hidden."

"He was right," said Thado. "All who did know, in India, are dead, and now these boys know. How did they come here?"

"Ralph told the story of the treasure to four friends at school, and Will Hazell, an orphan and possessed of a fortune, offered to pay the passage of all who would accompany himself and Ralph. Five were chosen for the journey, and I became the sixth when discovered listening at a keyhole to their plans. They were afraid I'd spread it around if left out—and I would have! Well, to make a long story short, we all quit school—ran away, rather—and took passage—"

"Hist!" warned Thado, who heard Hazell, Dean and Lester coming thru

the brush. 'We will meet again,' and Thado disappeared in the night.

"Scotty Miggs stood an instant where the high priest had left him, then, turning on his heel, he strode back to the hut, muttering:

"Once these fellows are put out of the way by the Thugs, the secret is all mine, and I'll be rich—rich! Lucky I met that high priest Thado, and told him what the boys are up to, although I don't trust him too far not to turn on me, too."

"Pushing open the door of the hut, the traitor glided in. Frank Clinton, the sixth member of the diamond seeking party still lay sleeping on the mat.

"Hey, Frank," Scotty called. "The boys are coming back. Be here in a minute."

The six boys of the original party, reduced to five by Charlie Hayward's murder by the strangler's cord, are presently reduced still further by the capture of Frank Clinton and the flight of Scotty Miggs, whom they had point-blank accused of informing the Thugs of their mission. Scotty felt it unsafe for him to hang with the party any longer; he'd be better off, at least for awhile, in a village in the jungle inhabited by Thugs, and it was to this place Frank Clinton was taken when surprised alone at the hut by a party of the fanatics. Thado, the high priest, was also head man of this village, and when Frank was brought in, he pronounced sentence of death immediately.

"In all that crowd as he was borne away, Frank Clinton saw but one face—that of a girl, evidently about

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eighteen years of age, who followed him with her dark, lustrous eyes. Her skin was white, suggesting English blood, and her sparsely-clad form was rarely symmetrical, while the beauty of her face caused Frank for a brief moment to forget his desperate situation. What could such a girl be doing among these Thugs?

"Watching Frank being carried away, the wistful expression of her face deepened visibly and rising from her seat as he was lost sight of, she glided into the hut which formed her home. Presently she left again, with a coil of something spotted in her hand, and flitted past the rear of many thatch-roofed dwellings until she was past the village limits . . ."

"Scotty Miggs had followed the crowd out of the village and stood grinning as Frank Clinton was prepared for torture designed to end in his death: by strangling or suffocation. Already tied hand and foot, a rope was attached to his waist and flung over a lower branch of a tree whose limbs spread above a sandy-bottomed river. Sinewy arms swing Frank outward, until his feet rested on a small rock around which the sand-filled water eddied.

"Now Frank Clinton had never seen a quicksand before, but it entered his harried mind that such a death trap lay below him. Nor were his enemies quite finished. A second rope, with a running noose in it, was expertly pitched outward and fastened to the tree so that the open noose hung beneath his chin. Scotty Miggs' face grew positively fiendish with glee, as he exclaimed:

"Takes these Thugs to think 'em up, Frank! You got your choice of a way to die; standing on that little slippery rock, you'll live while your strength holds out. The minute you slip off, the noose'll tighten, the branch will break with your weight and dump you in the quicksand!"

"Frank Clinton was too intent on keeping his balance at the moment to pay heed to Scotty and the staring crowd. They tired of watching him after a time, night was coming on; but before it was quite dark, the ap-

parently doomed boy found himself alone.

"He heard a rustling on the bush-fringed embankment, raised his eyes from the quicksand and saw it was the white girl who had watched him at the village. Evidently she had been waiting for the crowd to disperse, for she went about the business of releasing Frank at once, motioning for him to keep silent. Standing on the river bank, first she hauled in the line with the noose in it, removing the risk of Frank hanging himself. Next she tightened the rope leading from his waist to the tree trunk; then picked her way nimbly over the rocks to his side, carrying a coil of what looked like spotted whipcord. This she unwound to slip a noose under Frank's arms; then attacked his bonds with a knife at her girdle. Frank kept saying, 'Good girl! Good girl!' so relieved at his escape from death he could think of nothing else to say.

"She smiled faintly. 'Now, careful how you step on these slippery rocks. You're anchored to the tree, but this rope of twisted snakeskin under your arms is an extra precaution. I'm very sure-footed in these sandals and I'll keep tight hold. Come on.'

"Once on firm ground, both paused for breath. Frank expressed his deep gratitude to his rescuer and asked her name and why she was living in the Thugs' village. 'My name is Cora,' she answered, 'and my father lives there, too.'

"He had told his name and was hesitating over what else he should reveal, when the girl said, 'I know of your mission here in India,' and motioned him abruptly to follow her. She led the way down a gorge and through it to a plateau beyond. The moon came out, and Cora, pressing the knife into his hand, said:

"Go; we may meet again."

"And before Frank could say another word, she slipped away in the brushwood."

Of course, Frank's three pals, Ralph Dean, Will Hazell and Harry Lester had been looking for him since his disappearance from their head-

quarters hut—to which Frank returned and, finding the other three gone, set out in search of the searchers.

The trio strayed into the jungle and there became hopelessly lost. A party of Thugs crossed their path and gunsmoke mushroomed in the jungle from revolvers and rifles. The struggle was desperate, but, owing to the superior number of the Indians, it was destined to be of short duration. Ralph, Will and Harry, with no time to reload empty guns, had to resort to hunting knives. The boys slashed away like demons, but the Thugs closed around the devoted trio, less fearful of knifeplay, in which they excelled, than firearms, and shortly the diamond seekers were disarmed and prisoners.

"Thado was not with the party, and there was some argument among the Thugs whether the boys should be taken to the village or disposed of on the spot. They knew the high priest wanted to be rid of them, no matter how. He had been infuriated at the escape of Frank Clinton—suspected Cora of releasing him—and the leader of the boys' captors came up with a plan that turned the three sick with horror. Night was rapidly falling and giving a few hurried commands to the band, the leader stalked off through the jungle growth, and his companions, picking up the bound captives, followed quickly.

"Night came on, and the moon lit up their track to some extent as they plunged deeper into the jungle. Wild beasts darted across their path, and the occasional roar of tigers somewhere ahead left no doubt in the boys' minds as to the dangerous character of the locality.

"Half an hour more and they had reached a clearing some thirty feet in circumference, and here the captives were once more deposited on the ground, while the Thugs set to work chopping enough stakes to tie the boys spreadeagled in the center of the clearing. They were to be left as prey for roaming tigers; and after performing a sort of war dance around them, the Thugs left the boys to their fate.

"Bait for tigers! It was a horrible end to contemplate. Ralph, Will and Harry listened to the Indians' retreating footsteps, and strained ears for sounds more terrible than any they had yet heard, the hunting call of tigers which would tell the striped terrors had caught the scent of the young men staked out like helpless goats.

"It wasn't long before tigers were making their presence known in the vicinity, at first a distant, deep-throated roaring, then growls and muttering in minor key so as not to warn intended prey as the big hunting cats approached. In vain the lads renewed their struggles to uproot the stakes, but the Thugs had secured the captives too firmly to admit of their breaking loose.

"At this juncture the moon passed behind a cloud, leaving the clearing in pitchy blackness, and as the boys gazed in horror toward the rustling sounds in the surrounding brush, three pairs of glaring eyes stared back from the thickets. Three man eaters evidently had scented them from afar.

"A moment's pause, then one long, striped body angled toward the staked out shapes, hugging the earth, snarling deep in throat. It was stalking Ralph. He was too paralyzed to make a sound—Will and Harry the same. Another pause, a lower throaty utterance; the terrible beast suddenly launched itself at Ralph. That instant the moon sailed out of the cloud-bank and its glow penetrated to the clearing, touching briefly the leaping tiger. Crack! The sharp report of a rifle; a bullet struck the hungry beast behind the ear, and with a howl of agony, it crashed to earth—dead!

"So fearfully wrought up had been the feelings of Ralph Dean when he saw the tiger spring toward him and the sudden shot stretched it lifeless, that all before him swam in a ruby haze. And the danger had not yet departed.

"Startled by the mysterious rifle shot and the quick death of the first tiger, the other two had slunk back a pace or two, snarling defiance. But they were scared off just for the mo-

ment. Sinking to its belly, one began a creeping advance on Will Hazell. Would the mystery marksman fire again?

"A noise in the thicket whence the first bullet had come diverted the tiger's attention, a clicking noise. It was the sound of steel striking against flint. Next instant a tiny spark of fire flickered through the interlaced branches and elicited a throaty growl from the tiger. The spark swiftly grew into a broad flame, and lashing its tail from side to side the furious animal turned and faced it.

"Fatal step. The moment the gleaming eyes were turned toward the growing flame, that rifle blasted again, the bullet striking fairly between the tiger's distended eye-balls. And before his mate could recover from her alarm, a wild yell rang up on the air and blazing brands rained down upon her.

"As the tigress headed for the green wall of the jungle, a husky boy's figure leaped to the center of the clearing, brandishing a couple of fire-brands. It was Frank Clinton! Dashing down the burning brands, he unsheathed a knife from his belt and with vigorous strokes set his friends at liberty.

"'Bravo, Frank!' cried Ralph, as Clinton seized him by the hand and pulled him to his feet.

"And Hazell, coming up just then, said, 'We were afraid we wouldn't see you again—alive, that is.'

"Making the recital short as possible, Ralph related what had happened to him, about the girl Cora and the rest of it. He also said that, starting to look for his comrades, he'd heard the sound of gunfire in the jungle and traced it in time to locate the Thugs with their captives and turn tiger slayer. But now they were reunited, all four wanted to get on with their secret mission. They'd camp where they were for the night, visit a trading post to get weapons to replace those taken by the Thugs, and then go on to the hiding-place of 'The Midnight Sun,' for which Ram Rupee had drawn a map and given it to Ralph. Frank stood first guard,

and the other three were soon asleep in the clearing. In his dreams Ralph saw flitting bands of Thugs and myriads of diamonds whose size would have put the extraordinary dimensions of 'The Midnight Sun' to shame.

"Journeying toward their goal next day they were sharply reminded of the traitor Scotty Miggs after leaving the trading post. Harry Lester had gone scouting ahead, packing his newly bought rifle, and by sunset, Frank, Ralph and Will hadn't caught up with him. While Frank and Will were pitching camp, Ralph went into the edge of the jungle, looking for Harry, calling his name. Ralph's foot kicked against something lying in the tall grass. It proved to be Harry's new rifle. Feeling sure now that something dire had happened to Lester, Ralph walked faster. He hadn't gone far when he discovered his missing chum. There hanging to the stout branch of a tree by the gaumaul or strangling cloth that had killed him was Harry Lester, rigid in death. His coat sleeve was torn away, a scarlet star, brand of the Thugs, showed upon his forearm, and pinned to his shirt was a paper with a single line: 'This blow for me, Miggs.'

"Apparently Scotty Miggs had joined the Thugs in earnest, hoping to use them in destroying his former friends and getting to 'The Midnight Sun' first, and, having caught Lester at some disadvantage, Miggs had disposed of one more of the original party of diamond seekers. The remaining three buried poor Harry in the jungle and with heavy hearts continued on their way.

"A day or two later they fell in with a fakir journeying toward the Ganges. He mentioned the temple of the goddess Kali and said that if the boys had never seen it, they should not pass up the chance to do so. As it was in the general direction that Frank, Ralph and Will were going anyway, they were curious to visit the place, not thinking that they might encounter Thado, high priest of the Thugs.

"Resuming their march the morning after the fakir joined them, they

traveled all day with only a short stop at noon. By sundown they had crossed the wide plain and stood upon a hill, looking down at the Temple of Kali. The slanting bars of the sinking sun gilded its domes. It was of impressive size and surrounded by a high wall. The white turrets presented a beautiful sight in the evening light, and they could see that within the walls were crowds of gaily clad natives.

"Ralph turned to the bearded fakir. 'So that is the Temple of Kali, goddess of the murderous Thugs.'

"The holy man's brow clouded. 'Yes. It will be impossible for you to journey onward unless you pay your respects to her image set up within.'

"But, objected Ralph, 'being outsiders, we might be murdered if we showed up in there.'

"The fakir shook his head. 'No, my presence will be your protection. Come, night will soon be on us and we must camp in the grove. Let us go into the temple without further delay.'

"And thus admonished, the little party descended the hill and made their way to the gate in the wall. Beside this hung a horn of shell, and over this an inscription which they were unable to read, being in characters of which Ralph was ignorant. Lifting the horn, the fakir blew a shrill blast.

"Jack the Giant Killer,' muttered Will Hazell, and the other boys laughed at the similarity of the incident.

"No sooner had the brassy echo died away than the gate was flung open by a white-turbaned native and they passed inside. Double doors to the temple stood open before them, and as they entered the doors closed with a clang and all was dark as pitch. Suddenly arose the voices of women singing; a sound like thunder rolled through the place; patches of fire ran hither and thither, and, for the first time, the boys began to feel alarm.

"Have we been trapped?' muttered Hazell, edging over to Ralph.

"I hope not,' was the whispered reply.

"He turned toward the fakir, but the holy man no longer stood by his side. Suddenly each lad was seized from behind and a brilliant light lit up the whole temple. By this time they saw an image of Kali on a pedestal beyond; on a raised dais before stood the fakir, but the cloth which had partially concealed his face—and which his class always wore—was gone, and as the noise grew in volume, the light more vivid, the boys recognized the man who had led them to this place—Thado, the Thug!

"Our heroes' situation was indeed an unenviable one after the many dangers they had passed through, nearly unscathed, almost certain death stared them full in the face at last. And through their own blindness in allowing themselves to be thus easily led into a trap by one of whom they were in total ignorance—"the fakir"—and whose own word alone vouched for its truthworthiness.

"By this time the chanting had ceased, and when all became still, the high priest, from his eminence, cast his eyes around and called:

"Ferrisie!"

"Here,' responded a deep voice, as the heavy curtains which draped an alcove were pushed aside, and a brawny figure strutted forth and prostrated himself before Thado. He was singularly clad in a loose, flowing robe of white, spattered with silver stars, and wore, as did the others, a band of white around his head. A scarlet tunic was flung over the spotless robe, and on the front of this was emblazoned a sun in silver—evidently in imitation of the great diamond of which the boys were in search. He was tall, well built, his head finely poised on a pair of broad shoulders, but strangest of all, he was white. Lifting the man to his feet, Thado pointed to the three captives and said:

"These are the seekers of The Midnight Sun. Death is their lot. Let them be taken to the vaults.'

"Bowling his head, Ferrisie turned into a gallery winding away to the right, and raising the bugle that hung at his waist by a chain, he blew an

echoing blast. Scarcely had the sound died away, ere the unseen choristers again began to chant, the place grew dark, again the patches of fire (Indian jugglery is indisputable) ran through the halls, then a faint light at the extreme end of the gallery came nearer and nearer; a hundred white-robed virgins—devotees of the goddess Kali—came down the passage, swinging censers and filling the air with incense.

"Go!" commanded the voice of Thado, and the boys felt themselves pushed along the gallery while the chorus grew louder. Where the gallery ended, steps began, a long flight of stone steps, dark and damp, down which they were led, going they knew not where.

"Light!" commanded Thado, gliding to the head of the little party as they were prodded toward the vaults. Torches flared up to illuminate a row of iron-barred doors, the entrance to cell-like rooms, and a large key-ring jangled in Ferrisie's hand.

"Just then a Thug, breathing hard as though he had been running, came hurrying along the lower passage. The boys overheard his words as he caught up with Thado, the high priest: 'She has been found and brought back!'

"Thado uttered a jubilant shout. 'So! Then the sacrifice takes place this night!'

"He went back up the stone steps, almost running, and every Thug present followed swiftly. That left Ferrisie standing with the boys before the cell-like vaults. He was white as a sheet. 'My daughter!' he gasped.

"Ralph, Will and Frank were watching him keenly, but especially Frank,

"Your daughter,' he said to Ferrisie. 'Is her name Cora?'

"Yes, Cora Ferrisie."

"I owe my life to her!"

"So you are that man.' The agitated father's eyes were wild. 'Because she saved you and is regarded as a traitor by Thado, and to appease the goddess Kali, Cora is to be beheaded. She escaped into the jungle, but they have found her, and now . . . ' He

paused tragically.

"The boys—and Frank most emphatic of all—at once declared they were ready to stage a last ditch fight to save the girl if they but had their firearms.

"Ferrisie's face lighted up. 'I will bring you the weapons and fight beside you. No doubt you wonder at my presence here with my daughter. It is almost three years since we were captured by the high priest and taken to the village where he reigned supreme. I am Doctor Owen Ferrisie, from New York, and I hoped to establish a hospital for the natives, but never had the chance. I pretended to become a devotee of Kali so that I could the better protect my daughter —'

"Doctor,' interrupted Frank, 'we can hear more of your story later. Get those guns and show us where they've taken Cora, if you know.'"

Shortly afterward, clutching their rifles, with six-shooters back in holsters, Frank, Ralph and Will follow Doctor Ferrisie up the stone stairs, back the way they had come.

"Through gallery after gallery rushed the devoted little band, with the almost crazed father leading. Bom-bom-bom-bom-m-m! rang forth the hollow sound of a bell, echoing and re-echoing through halls, and galleries with a soul-chilling clamor. Dr. Ferrisie's face grew whiter still, if that were possible; he brandished aloft the torch he carried and fairly skimmed over the marble floors.

"Alluding to the bell, Ralph asked, 'What's the meaning of that, doctor?'

"It summons the faithful to the council chamber to witness the execution,' replied Ferrisie. 'They have lashed her to a bent sapling, arranged in such a manner that by cutting a line her head will be torn from her body. A moment's delay may be fatal to her!'

"A hoarse murmur arose in the temple, lights flashed up, the mock thunder rolled and crashed, the deathly chant began, and above all pealed the ominous tones of the bell.

"Heaven grant we are powerful

enough to save her!" cried the doctor.

"The chant went on, with ever varying movement; now low, as if it were dying out, now high and swelling. And so our friends turned into a passage at the right and sprang down a flight of gilded steps into the council room, at that moment about to be turned into a death chamber.

"Dense volumes of perfumed smoke rolled up to them, but they could see beyond, in the rear of the wide chamber, a great mass of people gathered. The whole scene formed a picture they would remember to their dying day.

"In the center of the council room stood Thado, clad in his priestly robes of white, a crown of gold, emblazoned with a silver sun, graced his head, the right sleeve of his robe was pulled up and in his hand he grasped a shining sword of rare pattern and superior workmanship.

"On her knees and leaning forward over the block of marble to which she was fastened was Cora Ferrisie, her dark hair loosened and cascading over her shoulders. A sapling had been introduced into a hole in the marble floor, and this was bent over so that the top hung above Cora's head, and in this position it was secured by a line passing around the trunk and fastening it to the floor.

"From the end a noosed rope depended and was drawn tight about the victim's neck, so that, by severing the line which held the sapling, it would spring back and tear off the poor victim's head. The boys, especially Frank, greeted the sight with horrified eyes. Even in India they had not looked for such barbarous torture.

"Thado brandished his sword, the singing ceased, and drawing nigh to the sacrificial block, he raised his sword to strike the fatal blow which would cut the rope. The intended victim remained perfectly still—all was silence; in another second the sword would fall, and it was impossible for Cora's father or the boys to reach her in time to avert it. But Frank Clinton's rifle snapped to his shoulder, and despite the sweet-scented vapor

filling the council chamber, he took quick aim and there was a heavy report as he squeezed trigger. With a howl of rage, Thado sprang back, the sword blade falling in pieces to the floor, and he stood there with the jeweled hilt in his hand.

"Frank had fired to break the sword, fearing that, if he shot to kill the high priest, the latter might have life and strength enough to slash the fatal rope as he died. But moments later, a second bullet from Frank's rifle stretched Thado on the marble floor, and Ralph and Will had joined him in holding the enraged spectators at bay while Dr. Ferrisie carefully released Cora. She had fainted dead away and her father led the retreat back toward the labyrinth of galleries with her cradled in his strong arms.

"Two things aided our party in their flight: the clouds of sweetish smoke which befogged figures even near at hand, and the fact that not many of the Thugs carried guns. The strangler's cord was their favorite weapon. But some carried scimitars or spears (these were guardians of the temple) and all had wicked-looking knives. There wasn't too much chance to use this assorted weaponry against rifles and revolvers in the hands of Frank, Ralph and Will, who were forcing their pursuers to keep a certain distance. Blind rushes by some of the more fanatical had laid them low. A dozen Thugs besides the high priest had fallen, not to rise again, before the fugitives hit the stone stairway to the underground passages. One of these was Scotty Miggs, who, clad like a Thug in turban and loin cloth, had been prominent in the chase until Ralph drilled a hole between the traitor's eyes.

"Dr. Ferrisie, knowing every inch of the temple layout and carrying his daughter as if she were a featherweight, lost the mob in a lower passageway; the boys paused to reload their rifles and hand-guns, then took after the swift-moving, berobed figure of the doctor along the narrow passage until they felt the night air fan their cheeks and saw the stars

above them. They were in the garden of the temple."

Thus they escaped from the Temple of Kali, and under cover of night put a good stretch of miles between it and themselves. After daybreak, they fortunately encountered a British cavalry patrol, which escorted them well beyond the reach of Thugs seeking reprisal. Except for one dangerous half day when, following the map given Ralph by old Ram Rupee, they went in quest of the "big diamond." They found the spot where the great treasure was said to be, "a cavern in the high hills, with a flat, smooth stone in its back wall, on which they could plainly trace the mystic letter M in a circle of stars. Cora and her father were as much interested in the discovery as the boys; they knew about the great diamond without knowing exactly where it was hidden.

"Ralph laid his thumb upon the 'M' and pressed with all his might. Settled and solid with its long stand, the stone refused to move. He tried again but with no better success. In desperation he snatched up a rock and struck the letter. With a sharp rustle the stone slid back, and there, at the foot of a brazen image of Kali, reflecting a thousand hues in the torchlight, firmly imbedded in a bank of dried moss, lay the mighty diamond so aptly named 'The Midnight Sun.' They feasted their eyes on its magnificence. They were rich now, richer than they had ever thought to be in their wildest dreams. Making a bag of his shirt, Ralph Dean secured the treasure in it.

"After a brief moment of peril from Thugs in a seaport town, the party of five took passage for America, and here the huge gem was disposed of to the satisfaction of all. Indeed, the writer of this story (so says "Ed. King") has lately seen a necklace fashioned from parts of it, in the window of a celebrated establishment. One thing more, or rather two: Cora later became the bride of Frank Clinton, and Dr. Ferris was thankful to be alive and back safely with his daughter in Little Old New York."

The End

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Dick Turpin

THE FAMOUS HIGHWAYMAN

by W. O. G. Lofts

A few years ago, in the ancient city of York, I stood beside the grave of Richard ("Dick") Turpin, the famous Highwayman. Situated in a desecrated and now disused churchyard, overgrown with weeds, the last resting-place of one of England's most famous—or should I say infamous?—characters is marked simply by the initials R. T. on a large flat plain gravestone.

Standing in that small and completely isolated cemetery I marvelled how the tomb of such a world-famous character could be so neglected. Although it must be remembered that Dick Turpin was a criminal and, according to the laws of the land, was justly hanged at York in 1739. He was certainly no hero, as is believed by so many people even today.

Alone in that graveyard, boyhood memories came flooding back to me—memories of the days when Dick Turpin was my favorite hero, as he was the hero of thousands of other boys. I remember how, after spending what few pennies I had at the Bank Holiday Fair at Hampstead Heath, I would roam over the Heath to gaze in wonder at the ruins of stables where the highwayman is alleged to have rested his horses. I pictured him riding at full speed on Black Bess to the Spaniard's Inn nearby, which was one of his favorite meeting places.

Like many other boys I had no doubt learned most of Dick Turpin's history from the many juvenile papers which had chronicled his adventures. In these papers Dick was portrayed as a tall, dark, handsome man, who robbed the rich to feed the poor. He also rode from London to York non-stop in twelve hours on his favorite horse, Black Bess.

In recent years, however, becoming greatly interested in history and juvenile fiction, my somewhat youthful illusions were shattered to find that most of the above facts were untrue.

I was also greatly dismayed to find that, at the turn of the 20th century, quite a few historians and editors of boys' papers were stating that Dick Turpin was in real life an illiterate, blustering coward, a sheep-stealer and a cattle-rustler—in general, a murderous villain of the highest (or lowest!) order who was eventually led to the scaffold begging for mercy.

Considerable investigation at the British Museum London Record Office and other historical places into records compiled when Turpin roamed the highways impels me to reply that although he was undoubtedly a thief and a highwayman, and met his just desserts on the gallows, one cannot help harboring a sneaking admiration for him. Contrary to many of the experts, he was certainly not illiterate, was in no sense a murderer and was most certainly a brave man. Above all, he was very popular with the poorer classes and some records do indicate that he robbed the rich to feed the poor.

For the start of our story, however, we must go back to a small hamlet in Essex, in the days of Queen Anne, the last of the Stuart sovereigns.

* * *

Richard Turpin was born at the Bell Inn, Hempstead, seven miles from Saffron Walden, where his father, John Turpin, was the landlord. His birth date—which can still be seen in the baptismal entry in the local Parish Register—is officially recorded as September 21st, 1705. This inn, incidentally, still stands, though it is now known as the Rose and Crown. A signboard outside the inn says boldly: "Dick Turpin's birth-place" and opposite the inn is a circle of trees, where he used to tether his horse when visiting his early home.

At an early age he went to school, to learn to read and write, and was a most promising scholar. He wrote with a fluent hand, which would seem to disprove the fact that he was supposedly illiterate. His boyhood days appeared to be quite happy, he had a sister, two years older than himself, and they seemed a contented, ordinary

family. At the age of 16 he was apprenticed to a butcher at Whitechapel and began to learn his father's previous trade (he was a master butcher).

Mixing with idle companions, however, Dick soon began to cultivate extravagant habits and in order to "pay his way" he eventually took to the highway as a footpad.

Romance came early to young Turpin. In his schooldays he had always been fond of Betty Millington, a maid at the house of his schoolmaster's father (a James Smith). He married her in 1728 at the age of 23 and they had a daughter. Setting up as a butcher at Thaxted, Essex, Dick Turpin—again like his father—became landlord of a public house. But the venture was unsuccessful and he once more reverted to his previous trade as a butcher.

With debts piling up—due to his extravagant way of life—and with no capital to buy his stock of meat, Dick resorted to stealing his "stock" from the surrounding countryside. In those days cattle- and sheep-stealing were capital offences, punishable by hanging. Eventually the law caught up with him and investigators found at his slaughter house two specially-branded cattle hides. A warrant was soon out for his arrest.

Turpin fled and eventually joined a gang of smugglers. Later on his love for Essex induced him to return there, where he joined the famous Gregory gang in Epping Forest.

Finding the country of Essex too risky to continue his activities, Dick Turpin went further north and joined up with Tom King, a famous highwayman, who was perhaps his closest friend. This successful partnership continued for over three years, until King was accidentally shot by Turpin during an ambush. With an exceptionally large reward on his head, Dick was forced to go into hiding, and he posed as a "country gentleman" of means, living under the name of "John Palmer." (This was, incidentally, his mother's maiden name.) In this guise he sold and exchanged many thoroughbred horses.

Then, returning one day from a

day's shooting at Borough Cave, Yorkshire, at the beginning of October 1738, Turpin (whom it must be confessed had taken more wine than was good for him) rested at The York Arms, Beverley, where he cast his eye on the landlord's splendid gamecock, which had sprung from an adjoining yard on to a low fence nearby. Levelling his pistol, the outlaw fired and as the smoke from the discharge cleared away it was seen that the bird was dead. At once Turpin was seized and taken by the constable before the nearest Justice of the Peace, and for this small misdeed he was sent to a house of correction.

As he refused to give any account of himself, apart from the fact that he came from Lincolnshire, suspicion was aroused, and eventually Turpin, heavily ironed, found himself in the gloomy dungeon of York Castle. From this dismal prison the captive wrote to a relative in Essex imploring him to prepare for his defence such a character as would enable Turpin to successfully disclaim ever having had any connection with the famous highwayman. But by a chain of most unfortunate coincidences, this letter fell into the hands of his old schoolmaster, who instantly recognized his handwriting—and the game was up.

On the 22nd March 1739 he was tried at York on several indictments for horse-stealing, highway robbery, and for shooting a servant. One of the principal witnesses against him was his old schoolmaster, who revealed the fact that he had taught the prisoner "the art of writing"—and declared that the "John Palmer" who stood in the dock was undoubtedly the Dick Turpin whom he had taught as a child.

Realizing that his case was hopeless, Dick Turpin confessed to his real identity and was condemned to death.

* *

Like an actor determined not to disappoint his audience, Dick purchased a new fustian frock coat and new buckle shoes. On the day of the event—which was the 7th April 1739—he ordered the hangman to hire

five poor men to follow him to the gallows as mourners. He paid these men £3.10s.0d—a large sum in those days—and provided them with hats and gloves for the occasion.

But it should be explained that, as hanging in those days were public spectacles, the principals were expected to play their parts to the satisfaction of the spectators, who regarded such events as entertainment.

Turpin's last kind thought was to give a new pair of shoes to a poor woman in the town. Then, handsomely dressed, he mounted the cart, to be conveyed to the scaffold, some two miles outside the City of York. The heavy manacles had been struck from his ankles and wrists. In the company of the turnkeys, the Governor of the Castle, the chaplain, a body of minor officials, plus of course the five poor men, Dick was drawn in the cart to the appointed spot where already a vast crowd had assembled.

At length Knavesmire was reached and after the minister had read out the solemn ritual appointed by the church for the burial of the dead, the highwayman in the following words addressed the Sheriff and those immediately standing by:

"I shall not speak to the multitude present, as is the custom of many offenders. My regret is that I suffer for so base a crime; I had rather it had been for some offence more fitted to my career. It would take long to relate my many robberies. In none did I ever shed blood, though life I have taken in self-defence. It avails me naught to conceal it, but the murder, if you may so call it, of a servant, was the act of this hand. I am justly sentenced and I fear not to meet my fate."

As Turpin mounted the ladder, whose rungs he would never descend again, his right leg trembled and with a sudden stamp of anger at his own momentary weakness, he brought his foot down sharply to steady the shaking nerves.

Then, after his brief address, he conversed pleasantly with the hangman for a few moments while he was making his preparations. Then, before

the hangman had a chance to complete his share in the execution, Turpin—with sudden fearless energy—flung himself off his foothold on the scaffold with the noose around his neck. He died instantly and the brave manner in which he met his death strengthened his hold on the imaginations of the people, for at least he had proved that he was no coward, whatever other failings he may have had.

Now, did he really rob the rich to feed the poor, as was commonly believed? Although he certainly robbed people for his own ends, there is evidence that some credence should be attached to this belief. Official records relate two instances which best sum up Turpin's character.

In the first he met a country dealer and demanded him to deliver his money. The poor man told him that he had only 15/6d on him and if Turpin took this he would be ruined, as it was all he had in the world. Dick, whose own funds were completely exhausted, replied that he must have the money to get to a certain place on time—but if the "gentleman would be at Newgate Street at the same hour the next day and stand with his hat in his hand, he was not to notice if somebody dropped something into it.

The man did so and had not been standing long when a small package was dropped into his hat. It contained no less than ten guineas—and we can image the poor man's delight!

On another occasion, robbing a poor woman on her way back from market, she told Dick he was taking her rent money. Not quite believing this, the highwayman made enquiries and when he found the woman's story was true he traced her abode and threw into her front window a leather bag containing gold and silver.

There are other cases on record where Turpin showered handfuls of money into the crowds of poor people—and probably such generous deeds as these emphasized the secret of his hold on popular imagination as well as the affection of the public. That his feelings could be both deep

and sincere could not be denied.

* *

The story of his ride from London to York was certainly not true, however. The legend was the invention of that romantic novelist, Harrison Ainsworth, who graphically describes this fictitious ride in his famous novel "Rookwood" in 1834 (nearly a century later). This induced many authors to commence writing romances around the exploits of the dashing highwayman. Probably Ainsworth was influenced by John Lepton, Esquire to James I, who in 1606 wagered that he would ride between London and York six times in six consecutive days as a feat of horsemanship, using a team of horses.

A later official record shows that John Nevison, better known as "Nicks"—a well-known highwayman at the time of Charles II—rode from Gads Hill to York, some 190 miles, in 15 hourse, again using a team of horses. This was done to establish an alibi for a crime he had committed. In actual fact it would have been impossible for any one horse to travel non-stop from London to York!

To classify Dick Turpin as a murderer is doubtful on the evidence shown. True, it is recorded that he once shot a manservant named Thompson. Thompson went out to shoot Turpin with a pistol and Dick shot him only after the courageous servant had fired at him first—and missed.

The most surprising fact of all is that no authentic picture or drawing exists of Dick Turpin, and one would have to compile a modern "Identikit" to get some idea of his real appearance. He was certainly far from

handsome, but from reward posters one gleans that he was 5 ft. 9 ins. in height. His complexion was deeply browned from the open-air life he led, but marred by the scars of smallpox. He had wide cheekbones, with the face thinner towards the chin, and his carriage was very upright, with broad shoulders and a thickset figure.

Since Ainsworth's "Rookwood" thousands of fictional stories have been written about the romantic, swashbuckling Dick Turpin, most of them in boy's stories. It is worth recording the early Aldine "Dick Turpin" libraries in England at the turn of the 20th century—and at a later date the Newnes "Black Bess" Libraries—where most of the stories were written by Philip Atkey ("Barry Perowne" of Raffles fame.) Long before then a clever writer around 1860 brought out a penny blood (worth incidentally a King's ransom today, as only one copy is known to exist in the world, and is held by the British Museum) entitled "May Turpin Queen of the Road"—though there is no evidence to state to the contrary that Turpin's wife or sister led nothing else but a normal peace-loving existence.

As is only to be expected, several films have been made. The first, in 1922, featured Matheson Lang in the role of Dick Turpin. This was followed by Victor McLaglan and Louis Hayward.

Many kings, queens and famous Government ministers of the early 18th century are all but forgotten, but the name of Dick Turpin lives on. In his favor let us remember that he was one of the products of his time,

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

298. Capt. Everard P. Digges La Touche, CMR 3, Box 5661, APO San Francisco, Calif. 96553 (New member)
299. Clarence M. Fink, 296 Ohio St., Pasadena, Calif. 91106 (New member)
300. John M. Lohn, 709 S. Lorraine Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90005 (New)
301. Max T. Lanctot, 159 Park St., Burlington, Vt. 05401 (Former member)
142. William J. Clark, 11744½ Gateway Blvd., Los Angeles, Calif. 90064 (New address)
85. I. S. Seidman, 4 West 22nd St., New York, N. Y. 10010 (New address)

driven by circumstances rather than inclination into becoming an outlaw. In those days—nearly 250 years ago—a first lapse usually left the miscreant no chance to repent or reform, except on the gallows. The harsh laws then in existence were made for the protection of property rather than for the protection of human life.

Thief and highwayman he undoubtedly was, but he was loyal to his family. His father offered all his savings of a hundred pounds to try to get him transported to Australia, instead of the death sentence, which shows the affection they had for him.

He was a friend of the poor, and a very brave man. And that is how I would like to remember that King of the Road, Dick Turpin—the Dashing Highwayman.

DIME NOVEL NOTES

By Gerald J. McIntosh

There was a story in "TRUE, THE MAN'S MAGAZINE" for December, 1967, on Don Meredith, quarterback for the Dallas "Cowboys" of the National Football League that tells a lot about the sensational shenanigans he pulled in his early days as a member of the Pro team. A full page photo is shown of Don in his football togs, with his number 17. From the mouth of Don in the manner of a character in a cartoon comes the words, "Man, they got me mixed up with FRANK MERRIWELL . . . What I am is more the Minstrel—you know, the gypsy type!"

In their series, "MY MOST UNFORGETTABLE CHARACTER," the Readers Digest in a recently published issue had as a feature for the article the story of Albia Booth, hero of the game Yale won against Army back in 1929 and also responsible for beating Harvard more than once during his career at Yale. He was known as "Little Boy Blue." Like that great fictional hero at Yale, FRANK MERRIWELL, Booth was a modest fellow, one paragraph in the story goes on to say.

Any readers who were watching the NBC network on a day about ten days before Christmas 1967, might have seen and heard President Johnson as he was discussing the recently passed legislation pertaining to cleaning up the meat packing industry, assuring us of uncontaminated meats, etc. He mentioned a book written by Upton Sinclair in 1906, "The Jungle," (written before the President was born), the President told his audience that Mr. Sinclair was in the audience and asked him to stand, which he did, receiving great applause. Upton Sinclair was a member of our Round-Up. Guess this was as near as I ever got to seeing him. He was a grand looking old man as he stood there.

In December 1967 also, Walt Disney had a two-part program on NBC (Sunday nights) titled "A Boy Called Nothin'." A young boy goes West from Chicago to join a hard-boiled Uncle out there known as "Turkey Neck." In the very first scene in the story the boy comes off the train that brought him West and is holding a copy of "YOUNG WILD WEST WEEKLY" in his hand.

In a copy of one of the Western Magazines, TRUE WEST or FRONTIER TIMES, published at Austin, Texas recently was the announcement of the death of Raymond W. Thorpe, prominent writer on the old west. He had written several stories for both these magazines as well as for other western journals. Doubtless some of the few old-timers still around may—they also may not—recall that Mr. Thorpe was a member of the old Happy Hours Brotherhood conducted back in the 1920's by Ralph P. Smitn. His name appeared more than once in Ralph's Happy Hours Magazine as a member of the organization.

Anent his story on "Boyhood Heroes" in a recent number of the Round-Up, Don Buchan says a writer has asked him if he wasn't trying to "pull someone's leg" in the matter of the story on "Nimble Ike." Don reaffirms, however, there was such a book and that he really read it when he was a boy.

NEWS NOTE

The Swann Galleries of New York have been featuring dime novels in their auction catalogues lately. The June 5th sale listed 5 different groups, mostly colored covers including 300 Tip Top Weeklies, some Old Sleuth Weeklies, Fame and Fortune, Pluck and Luck, Secret Service, Liberty Boys, Nick Carters, etc. However the sale of April 24 provided the biggest thrill. Listed as item 352 was "Reckless Ralph's Dime Novel Round up Volumes 1-20." I wonder if there were any takers. (Information for above sent in by Gerry de la Ree and Frank C. Acker.)

DIME NOVEL COLLECTORS BOOK SHELF

A MANUAL FOR OLD CAR RESTORERS & COLLECTORS, edited and published by Harry Pulfer, P. O. Box 8526, La Crescenta, Calif. 91214. Among the countless articles about early automobiles are pictures of two dime novels featuring automobiles covers. Price is \$2.00 and is well worth it.

RECENTLY PUBLISHED ARTICLES CONCERNING DIME NOVELS

THE PRINCETON UNIVERSITY LIBRARY CHRONICLE, Vol. 30, No. 2, Winter, 1969. ALGER HEROES, THE MERRIWELLS, et al! by Ralph D. Gardner. A well written article about hero fiction as written by Alger and Patten. (This article will be reprinted in a future issue of the Round Up by special permission of Mr. Gardner and Princeton University).

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE STUDIES No. 88, 1968. VIRGIN TIMBER: THE MAINE WOODS AS A LOCALE FOR JUVENILE FICTION, by David C. Smith. An article devoted to the boys books which featured the Maine woods as a locale. Excellent as far as the article goes. Omitted are the numerous dime novels on the subject, especially the Merriwells who spent many a summer vacation camping in the Maine woods.

NEWSY NEWS

By Ralph F. Cummings

Guess it's about time I got off my high horse and did some writing, or everyone will be wondering what ails me.

Stanley E. Butcher of Andover, Mass. 01810, said he'd try to get down to see me this past summer, but guess he was busy, same as everyone else. He just loves his Secret Service, New Nick Carters, Young Glory, Yankee Doodle and so forth, we all do. Stanley loves books on the Civil War, and he is trying to get a magazine entitled "Confederate War Journal," issued "April 1893 to March 1894." Who has any for sale or trade?

His address is 4 Washington Ave.

Yep, I been having eye trouble all summer, ached and so on, so folks will wonder why Ralph Cummings, myself, haven't written to them, but when you can't, you can't.

Went to where I got my new glasses a little over a year ago, and had a new examination at \$6.00 and a new right lens it was found I needed at \$11.00. Everything was all O.K. for 3 days then they kind of went back same as before. I spoke to my doctor about it, and he said that as I was 70 there wasn't much that could be done, but told me to bathe my eyes 2 or 3 times a day in cold water, and it's did the trick, but if I watch the long baseball games on TV they bother me some, so I am careful how I use them, you bet.

On top of that, the last 5 weeks I been going to my doctor for shots of Vitamin B12 as my blood pressure is 120 and 125 and the doctor says it's too low. He says a shot goes right through you in a very short time where it takes the pills much longer to work.

P. J. Moran of Concord, California is having one heck of a time of it with his eyes—I understand he is completely blind now. How can the poor man read, or see or do anything for that matter—it must be a terrible thing to be blind, and we all feel, that if there were anything any of us could do, we'd do it very quickly.

We want our friend Pat Moran to know we are all with you, and wishing we could do something.

(If you will permit the printer a mite of space: My son-in-law—who died at the age of 30—was completely blind for about the last ten years of his life. There are many good books on records or tape that can be borrowed for free—no postage even. I have wondered if there are any of the old "boys books" on the "talking books" available. If not, why not. Nearly every state and large city has facilities for the blind — I suggest

those who might be headed that way make necessary contacts now.)

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